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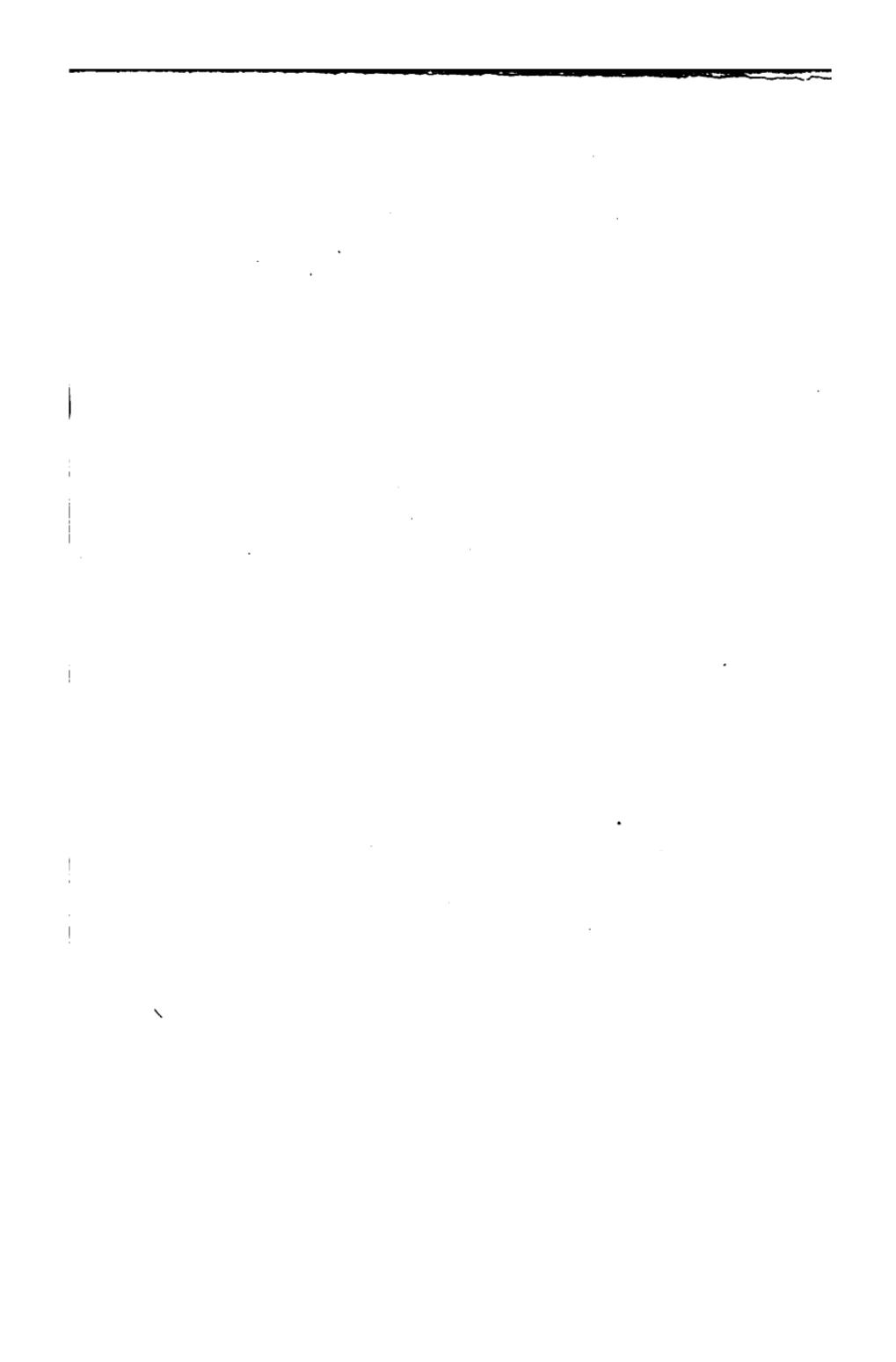
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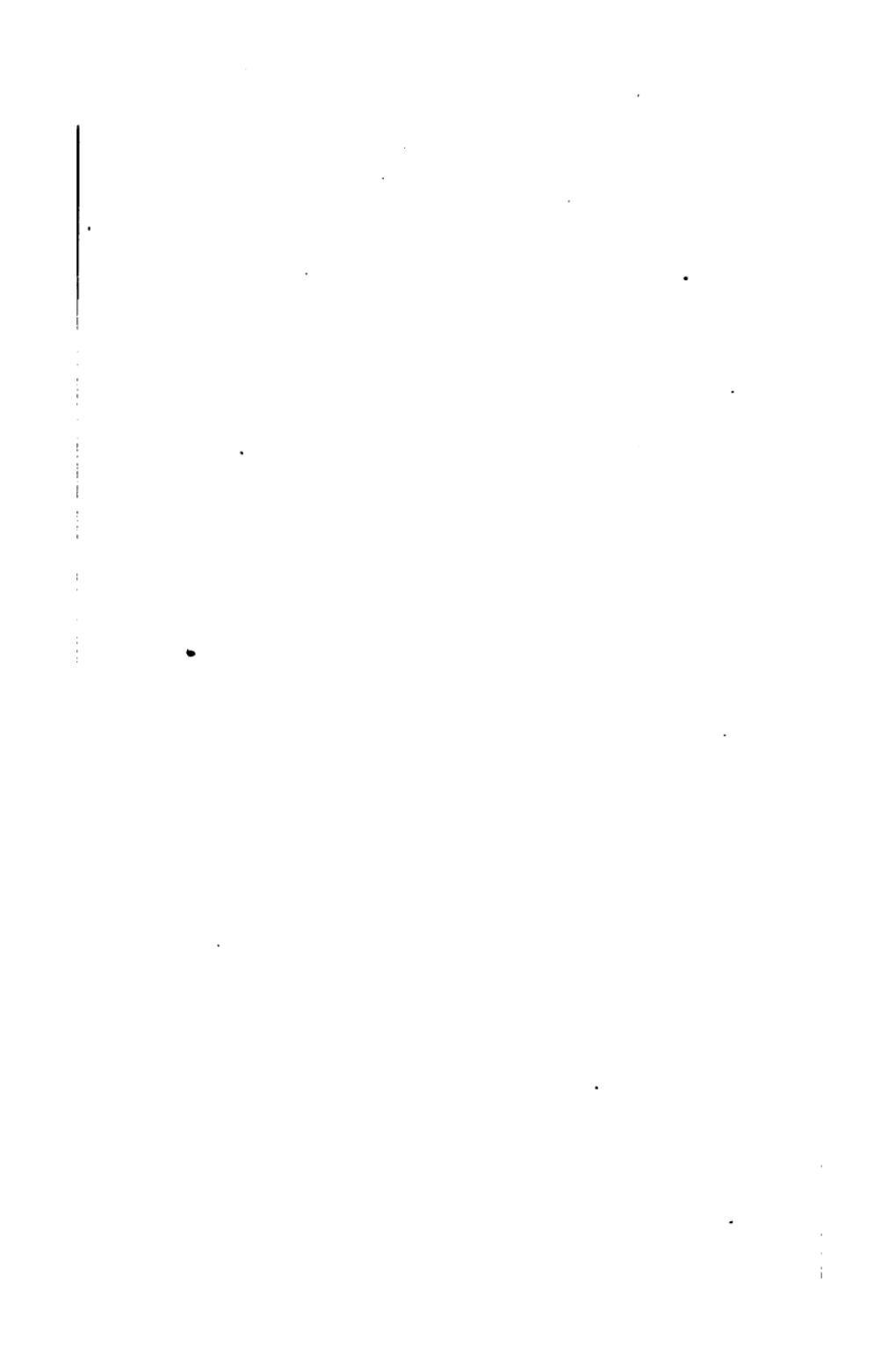
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**VERT-VERT.**





V E R T - V E R T

FROM THE FRENCH OF

GRESSET

BY

ROBERT SNOW Esq.



LONDON  
WILLIAM PICKERING

1850





## V E R T - V E R T.

FROM GRESSET.

**H**AVE read, in some grey-bearded  
author of science,  
Much travel proves often a dangerous  
thing;  
In the roof under which you were born, put reliance;  
Fickle change is of mischief the prodigal spring.  
Better keep side by side with the stay-at-home Lares,  
Ay, better by far never stir out of doors,  
Than cripple your virtue by foreign vagaries;  
For you *must*, or *will* do so, on barbarous shores.  
The above is my Theme. And my Muse's endeavours  
A Hero's adventures, in point, would rehearse;  
And the gossiping parlours monastic of Nevers  
Will attest, if you doubt, the whole truth of my  
verse.

So take, instead of moral Essay,  
VERT-VERT, from the French of Gresset ;  
Whose Muse, abhorring tiresome cantos,  
Tripped in galliards and corantos.

At Nevers then, there flourished once,  
A Popinjay, a Parrot-pet ;  
On whom a Sisterhood of Nuns  
The sum of their affections set.  
Sad memory's never-dying flame  
Leaps up afresh at VERT-VERT's name !  
From the burning Indian shore  
Transported to the banks of Loire,  
Beneath a roof of holiness  
Not by stealth or craft admitted,  
But for his own discreetly-witted,  
Unjesuitical address.  
His plumage did in hues surpass  
The Convent Chapel's painted glass,  
With contrasted masses dyed,  
Blue, green, and crimson, side by side.  
Yet not for that was his renown  
Blazoned over Nevers town,  
And widely through the country blown;

For eloquence he had, and art ;  
'Tis further said, he owned a heart.  
Archly brilliant, wise, yet merry,  
All-accomplished Popinjay,  
Playful, graceful, in the very  
Pride and flower of thy day !  
In thine ignorance how blest,  
Hadst thou never learnt to royster !  
Yet Bird was never, 'tis confessed,  
Half so worthy of a cloister ;  
So fit an inmate of a Convent grating ;—  
For Bird was never half so fond of prating.

Were I the kindnesses to number  
On VERT-VERT that the Dames bestowed,  
The catalogue would make you slumber :  
They were such an honied load,  
That even the Convent's Soul's Physician  
Dipped not so deep its buttery's dish in :  
For VERT-VERT better used to sup ;  
And ate the good man's sweetmeats up.  
Nay, the Priest was forced to run  
From disobedient Nun to Nun ;  
But 'twas the same with one and all ;

None knelt at his Confessional.  
This is the answer to the riddle :  
To VERT-VERT he played second fiddle.  
I see him now ! with angry fist, " Ay,  
Poll," cried he, "*Pol, me occidisti !*"  
But when with pious wish to warn her,  
He caught a Novice in a corner,  
With her sinfulness vainly he strove to impress her,  
Although to despairing he argued the point :  
For it must be confessed, that the Father Confessor  
Had his nose by the Popinjay put out of joint.

But not alone in tone and look  
Liberties our Parrot took :  
Encountering never cross rebuke.  
Often, as she came from church,  
He on some Sister's head would perch,  
And sportive vengeance seem to wreak,  
Billing with his curved beak,  
Whilst in the folds of her white muslin  
Its horny agate shell went nuzzling,  
As though, to testify his joy,  
His very mandibles should cloy.  
And still he'd softly bite, and linger,

Swinging round her taper finger;  
Affection's inward force revealing  
To her outward sense of feeling.

There was no evening coterie

Among the Sisters, all the summer,  
Complete without his company :  
He was their actor, singer, mummer :  
And though by all interrogated  
In a breath, he never bated,  
But dealt his answers with precision  
To every point in requisition.  
Great Cæsar thus, to five amanuenses,  
In the five modulations of the tenses,  
Could dictate all at once — and never lost his  
senses !

Of course, the Favourite was free  
To eat in the Refectory ;  
The choicest morsels there to glean  
Of no contemptible cuisine.  
He pampered too his appetite  
With tit-bit buns, and macaroons,  
And sugar-plums, from morn till night,  
The Sisters' pockets for him hoarded.

I've told you now how he was boarded :  
But how was bedded—where he slept,  
I have as yet a secret kept.  
Know then, each night he chose a Nun ;  
    Was ever such a lucky Parrot !  
Retiring with her, all alone ;  
    As for a third—he would not hear o't !  
And who but she whom he selected  
Was flattered to be so protected ?  
Assured by such an Anchorite,  
Against all fears that haunt the night.  
Of late, 'tis said, he most did love  
Some Novice's remote alcove ;  
Whom, when he had seen safe in bed,  
Beneath his wing he hung his head :  
And when from bed she used to spring,  
    As sweet and fresh as morning violet,  
His head he lifted from his wing,  
    A chartered witness of her toilet.

Her toilet ? Bless us ! yes indeed,  
Grave Sisters have of toilets need :  
Ay, and need of faithful mirrors  
To counter-check their toilets' errors.

What! would you restrict the Graces  
To diamond head-dresses, and laces?  
Nuns bid adieu to worldly passions :—  
Yet take the veil—with all *its* fashions :  
And have an art to render winning  
Wimples of the homeliest linen.  
Oft the Loves, a saucy rout,  
A coarse neck-kerchief swarm about :  
I've seen the line of beauty run  
Through flowing stuffs not finely spun ;  
The all in all's the putting on :  
And if you deem, of plainest holland  
Piquant caps are found in no land,  
Let that out of your thinking pass :—  
Then, early to consult her glass,  
Among the rules is surely one,  
Of the whole duty of—a Nun !

But I shall wear your patience down to zero,  
Unless I manage to rejoin my Hero.

Yes! VERT-VERT was the cream of darlings ;  
The soul's delight of the Retreat ;  
Yet heard were certain petty snarlings

From some unamiable carlines,  
Whose hearts with envy beat.  
Four tame nightingales died—they could bear it no  
longer;  
And two tortoise-shell cats, to such coldness  
unused,  
As the Parrot in favour grew stronger and stronger,  
Became *poitrinaires*, and all medicine refused !



**I**N such a school as this at Nevers  
VERT-VERT grew perfect in his clavers :  
And quite oracularly spoke,  
As though in proverbs, from a book.  
Save at his meals, he never stinted :  
But the seclusion of his college  
Forbad the *pot-pourri* of knowledge,  
And turn of phrase by worldlings minted.  
He was a complete Devotee ;—  
Quotations now he made ; anon  
Fell to a chant, or Christmas hymn ;  
Or with an air demure and prim,  
Chastely soliloquising, shone.

He knew his *Benedicite* ;  
Struck up, on Fast-days, *De Profundis* ;  
And *Jubilate* sang on Sundays ;  
Nay, at the sight of holy-water,  
*Oremus* cried, and *Alma Mater* !  
Such gear how could he but be pat in  
Among so many pious women ?  
Who, at sundry feasts of Latin,  
Gathered every scrap and trimming  
Into their own alms-basket of expression,  
And fed their Pupil thence, with scant discretion.

But, as his ear caught smooth and rough,  
He took his governesses off :  
His ready organ mocked at all  
Their voices, sharp, flat, big, or small ;  
Contralto—whine—soprano—drawl.  
Apt rogue ! sly Bird, to go beyond  
His teachers ! they, so passing fond,  
In their spoiled Darling saw no rudeness ;  
Ear-enraptured with his trillos,  
They trumpeted his peccadillos  
For nature, cleverness, and goodness !

The shoals of visitors that came  
To verify the Parrot's fame,  
From many a near and distant town,  
And up the stream of Loire, and down,  
Almost set Nevers in a blaze :  
Succession 'twas of gaudy days,  
So the Convent's great saloon  
Was crowded of an afternoon.  
There VERT-VERT used to perch in state !  
Some favoured Nun did on him wait,  
To see the assembly rendered homage  
To the air and colours of his plumage.  
But when he spoke, what new surprize !  
The audience gaped, and shut their eyes.  
An homily ! and with it blent  
Insinuating ornament !  
'Twas fine, his thread of recitation ;  
But finer still, each variation.  
Of real talent strange the power !  
Who shall explain the magic dower  
Of eloquence ? for, sure as eggs,  
Albeit great speakers oft enwrap us  
In sleep's sweet folds, in spite of flappers,  
None dozed with VERT-VERT on his legs !

Then, when he drew nigh his conclusion,  
As he commenced, without confusion,  
In style devout, he gathered in  
The orbit of his double chin,  
Composing to a dying fall  
His peroration musical :  
Then bowed, with sanctimonious air ;  
And left his audience—where they were !

VERT-VERT, throughout the realm of France  
The story of thy praise was told !  
But I must simply give a glance  
At how the wondrous tale was rolled,  
Upon the tongues of young and old,  
Down the Loire, as far as Nantes.  
But, to say this I will make bold,  
No fabling could the truth enhance.  
But what of Nantes ? I just have thought on't ;  
And to our plot 'tis most important.  
Well then, Nantes was the situation  
Of a religious old Foundation :  
The Parent-sheepfold of the Nuns  
Of Nevers ; so the charter runs.  
'Tis strange, these ancient Dames of grace

Are never hindmost in the race  
Of gossip ! news of men and things,  
Ere among seculars 'tis landed,  
Gets, somehow, to the Nunnery bandied,  
Or thither flies on tell-tale wings.  
Thermometers of what degree  
Can measure—curiosity ?  
'Twas thus the news of VERT-VERT's talents  
Threw these staid Nuns quite off their balance;  
Brewing among them fifty fevers :  
They sped in thought from Nantes to Nevers,  
With such a fidget and a rout,  
Their wits (what could be more absurd ?)  
Were turned the seamy side without,  
To scrape acquaintance with a Bird !  
At length the Nantese Nuns indite  
To the Nevernese, a brief  
Epistle, hoping VERT-VERT might  
Be safely trusted to the chief  
Of the boat-men of the Loire,  
So to reach the Nantese shore ;  
There to make good his wondrous story,  
By feats of intellectual glory.

And now, with all due compliment,  
Signed was the letter, sealed, and sent.  
Still, doubtful questions vexed like plagues :  
“ To Nevers hence, how many leagues ? ”  
“ When may an answer be expected ? ”  
The space—the time—they sorely fell it on :  
Devotion—dinner—was neglected ;  
And Sister Cicely grew a skeleton !

Pass we to Nevers with the letter.  
'Twas read. A chapter was convened.  
The most oppose it. “ What ? be weaned  
From charming VERT-VERT? Death were better ! ”  
Thus spake the tenderest young recluses ;  
For in their hearts love lay embowered,  
Yet hiding like a little coward :  
But they'd abundance of excuses :  
For, save the Parrot, none was there  
To claim of love a ready share.  
But nor alternative nor choice is :  
'Twas carried by the elder voices ;  
Which latter, for a month, agree  
To lend their Favourite. It would be

Unsisterly, and most unusual,  
To cling to obstinate refusal.

The bill had passed the *Ladies*, but  
The *Commons* of the Sisterhood  
Were into strange commotion put ;  
The matter in abeyance stood.  
Cried little Sister Seraphine,  
“ Must we to VERT-VERT bid good-bye ? ”  
And thrice and once the Sacristine  
Grew pale, and seemed at point to die.  
The Convent turned a house of mourning :  
Sad dreams all night declared their power,  
And swelled with many a pregnant warning  
The pity of the parting hour.  
But who the weeping Sisters could condemn ?  
That parting hour was widowhood to them.  
“ Go, darling ! happy may thy voyage prove !  
Pass for the foremost in the train of love.”  
’Twas thus a pallid sentimental Nun  
With tears her farewell tribute had begun,  
When rude authority steps in, and severs  
VERT-VERT abruptly from his friends at Nevers !

Tis done : the Favourite is slung on board ;  
The oars, held up in readiness, are lowered ;  
He's fairly off; for him 'tis vain to yearn ;  
The stream is with him, and the wind astern.



**T**HAT boatman's most commodious boat  
Passengers held not a few :  
And with VERT-VERT went afloat  
Who d'ye think, besides the crew ?  
Of young and old, perhaps a score :  
And of that number, less or more,  
A specimen I'll render you.  
Three dragoons, and Gascons two ;  
Two of the class of single ladies  
With Adam's sons at large whose trade is ;  
A wet-nurse, sloven in attire,  
Unwedded, and of ways unseemly ;  
A mouldy kind of maundering friar,  
Drunken, or belied extremely ;—

Of whose sweet converse, not a word  
Was comprehended by the Bird.  
Worthy was their whole display  
Of beer-shop, or *estaminet*.  
They gave him not the smallest hint  
Of having read their Septuagint.  
No single phrase they did promulgate  
Corresponded with the Vulgate.  
To wit, the gallant military  
Seem resolved the strength to vary  
    Of their pottle-deep potations,  
With a rich vocabulary  
    Of spontaneous adjurations :  
The Gascons, and the abigails,  
Threshed with their tongues, like barn-door flails :  
The friar's discourse grew thick and tangled :  
On t'other side, the boatmen wrangled :  
Above them all, the master thundered :—  
Bewildered VERT-VERT heard, and wondered !  
Him, howbeit confused and harassed,  
His own forced silence most embarrassed ;  
For to continue sad and dumb  
In travelling, is most wearisome.

Anon, one of the company,  
To rouse him from his reverie,  
Cries, “ Polly ! pretty Polly, talk !—  
Pretty Polly, what’s o’clock ? ”  
VERT-VERT, looking wondrous wise,  
Draws up with air aristocratic ;  
Simpers, whimpers, blinks his eyes ;  
Then, more like simpleton than knave, he  
In tone benignant, yet emphatic,  
Makes for answer, “ Sister, Ave ! ”

“ *Sacre !* ” whom have we here before us ?  
They all burst out, and laughed in chorus !  
And who but VERT-VERT was confounded,  
Thus by reprobates surrounded ?  
Here was no breath a flame to raise  
To fire the incense of his praise.  
Thought he “ what can be my mistake ?  
Surely, I am not well awake ! ”  
Then all their speech he pondered o'er,  
Like rich unfathomable lore,  
And held his peace, yet thought the more.  
Nay, he grievously suspected,  
Drawing conclusions worse than foolish,

His early teachers had neglected  
    Of language the finesse and polish,  
So mellifluously rounded  
These comrades' euphuism sounded,  
Lulling, syren-like, to rest  
The natural larum of his breast.  
Thus, in the moment he should not,  
His early lessons he forgot,  
Then, when his indignation warmed,  
And vanity became alarmed,  
And base ingratitude brake in  
To pave the way to further sin,  
He gave the ancient saw the lie,  
Crime is accomplished gradually.  
In villany a single dip  
Gained him his rake's professorship,  
As Vulcan, from Olympus, fell  
Down, in a single day, to hell.  
From holy rhapsodies an alien,  
He clung to catches bacchanalian.  
Of that lewd blaspheming crowd,  
None more than he profanely loud ;  
Of immorality suborner,  
A very heretic, and scorner,

All boundaries he overshot :  
New terms of slang by heart he got 'em ;  
And learnt, what's worse, to swear and curse,  
Like a veteran devil at bottom  
    Of a holy-water-pot !  
O, 'tis a fearful moral breach  
To travestie the parts of speech !  
If at the trope you will connive,  
And think you see a parrot drive,  
Upon the neck of metaphor  
He laid the reins, that it might scour  
The faster so, and with the vengeance  
Of modern express railway-engines !  
And as his new associates praised him,  
    So his pristine virtue faded :  
The higher with eulogy they raised him,  
    The lower his organ he degraded.  
But, virtue *will* be laid asleep  
In mightiest Heroes. We must keep  
Æneas's example by us ;  
Awhile, like Virgil, we must drop the "pius."

And did the witchery of travel  
For him no pure delight unravel ?

Did no soft touch of scenery  
Pierce deeper than his bead-like eye ?  
By Orleans, Blois, and Tours, he passed :—  
What thought he of them, first and last ?  
We've here, I fear, the spectacle  
Of a kind of feathered PETER BELL,  
To whom old cities by the Loire  
Were dull old cities—nothing more !  
But now, the spire of Nantes appears :  
The humming quay the vessel nears.  
And now, the eventful voyage is done :  
New scenes of incident are won.  
And whilst the safely anchored barge  
Did its company discharge,  
Each did with the other vie  
In wishing “ Pretty Poll ” good-bye.  
The liberal nymphs grief most express,  
And squabble for a parting kiss.  
Whilst to vociferous adieu  
Couched in the idiom of the stews,  
He makes reply, I grieve to say't,  
In antistrophic *Billingsgate* ;  
And from this luckless journey's close  
We date the birth of VERT-VERT's woes !

Anon, he catches sight of one  
Whom he'd have given the world to shun ;  
The Portress of the Convent-gate,  
Sent down his coming to await.  
It is a thing exceeding strange  
How hearts and characters will change !  
Less than a little week agone  
He would with eagerness have flown,  
A deep affection to express  
Even for the fashion of her dress ;  
But in our Hero's altered eye  
She seemed a subtle enemy.  
The very costume of her Order  
Was hateful, to its hem and border.  
By certain odious recollections  
Of litanies and genuflections,  
He saw at once how he was caught :  
    He must with her a dungeon enter :  
He shuddered, and at least in thought,  
    All Nunneries sunk below the centre !  
But that she-dragon seized his cage  
In triumph ! loud he grew with rage ;—  
Yet though with squalls he could not fright her,  
He, on the road, made shift to bite her.

To bite her ! where ? why, on the shoulder :  
Yet others, in assertion bolder,  
Vow 'twas the wrist—the elbow, some :  
The most insist upon the thumb.  
I have myself my private doubts ;  
Yet cannot nicely fix the whereabouts.  
But that signifies nothing. With no little trouble,  
To the Convent's saloon he was borne by the Dame:  
It spread upstairs, and downstairs, like wild-fire in  
stubble,  
The instant 'the announcement was heard of his  
Name.  
Nuns purblind, Nuns hobbling, Nuns old as their  
Reliquar,  
Were removed half a century back towards their  
prime ;  
'Twas, the deuce take the eldest ; and Mother An-  
gelica  
Made a run of it then for the very first time !



HOW, gazing on their gorgeous Guest,  
These Nuns of Nantes their eyes did feast !  
Nor can I blame them. For although  
He'd lost the abiding sense of duty,  
Discredit to high Church or low,  
To Priory or Tabernacle,  
VERT-VERT, the profligate, the rake-hell,  
Was not a whit the less a beauty.  
Fearless and soldier-like his air,  
Dashed with a petit-maitre's stare,  
Just like a coxcomb militaire ;  
One of those the public pay  
For polishing the town pavè.  
Good Heavens ! can none see through the borrowed  
Smoothness of a whitened forehead ?  
Can none by outward forms descry  
The inmost heart's perversity ?  
Go to, go to ! the whole Convent present  
Admired the Bird, with tongues incessant.  
At midsummer no hive within  
Was ever such a buzz and din :

They'd not have heeded, though asunder  
The sky above them had been rent with thunder.

VERT-VERT, amidst this hurly-burly,  
Kept silence, mainly out of spite ;  
Rolling his eyes to left and right,  
Like some youthful Carmelite :  
'Twas dignified, yet somewhat surly.  
*Lapsus* the first. This was the handle  
Preliminary of all the scandal.  
But when, more deeply to impress him,  
The Prioress did herself address him,  
To this effect our Squire begins ;  
Disdainfully and cavalierly,  
Articulately yet, and clearly,  
“ What fools Nuns are, odd's-heartikins ! ”  
His late companions, 'twas from them  
He culled this precious apothegm,  
And did his best to give it th' aidance  
Of fancy's touch, and golden cadence :  
And yet, perhaps he lacked the wit  
To comprehend the force of it.  
Let's hope the hyper-learned Clerk  
Was simply talking in the dark.

But, turning round, as preachers do,  
That all may hear in aisle or pew,  
A second time his text he dins—  
“ What fools Nuns are, odd's-heartikins ! ”  
At this, another of the band,  
Not too abashed to try her hand,  
With air as sooth as sugar-candy,  
Said, “ surely I do not understand ye :  
O Bird ! what so perverse has made ye ?  
Fie, fie, dear Brother ! *retro vade !* ”  
And what dy'e think replied the Brother ?  
I cannot quite his answer smother :  
He called her, as his tongue did itch,  
A name that patly rhymed to—*witch !*  
“ Jesu Maria ! Saints preserve us !  
Against the wicked sorcerer nerve us !  
Is this the language—monstrous—shocking !  
The holy Maids of Nevers talk in ?  
Is this the VERT-VERT we have heard  
So vaunted ?”—Here the Gallows-bird  
Distilled more drops of virgin honey—  
“ Confound ye ! curse ye ! Plague upon ye ! ”  
This trooper's sally put to flight  
The gravest of the Sisterhood :

Bolder some the shot withstood,  
Purposing to set him right.  
But the wanton Rogue paid off  
The persecution of their prose  
With oaths in bundles, scoff on scoff,  
And samples, cut and dried, of ribald stuff,  
And blasphemy, more than enough  
To give a band of buccaneers their dose.  
The explosions of the Varlet's tongue  
Spared neither old nor young !  
Selling his bargains—now, to Sister Anna—  
Now, to the meek-eyed dove Susanna.  
The Rake progressed from bad, to worse, and worst !  
Sullen at first, now forth there burst  
Such peals of horror from his beak,  
The votive candles burnt a sulphurous blue !  
Such words ! their mere initials to chaste eyes  
Revealed, show how he bade all hell arise,  
And pass before the Sisters in review—  
Great P, great D, great B, great W—  
The younger Sisters thought him speaking Greek !  
Nor ended here the desperate Caitiff's revels—  
“ Odds flesh ! — Fire ! — Fury ! — Fifty-thousand  
devils ! ”

Enough. The consecrated Building rocks,  
As cleft with earthquakes, or the thunder's shocks !  
Aghast, the Sisters fly, with rout and loss,  
Forgetting, some, the signal of the Cross.  
The Calendar's supply of Guardian Saints  
Falls short of the demand !—One screams—  
another faints !

Some, thinking 'twas the final day of doom,  
Rush to the wood-hole—to the cellar some :  
And, tumbling in the scurry, Sister Ruth  
Knocks out her foremost and her only tooth !



**B**UT, as scared sheep, lamb, ewe, and wether,  
Are scattered first, then crowd together ;  
As liquid silver, spilt, will run  
Its parted globules into one ;  
So, rallying, the Sisters met  
Once more—Faith, Martha, Margaret,  
Genevieve, Teresa, Anna,  
Catharine, Bridget, Juliana,  
Cunegund, Rosa, Agatha,

Dorothea, Barbara,  
And a long *et cetera*.

VERT-VERT ! hide thine unblushing face  
In the lowest Malebolge of disgrace !  
“ Send back the Judas to his place ! ”  
Concluded 'twas, without debate ;  
The attainted Bird was banished straight.  
And yet, it was not done without vexation :—  
When all was past, just at the last,  
They thought, from top to toe he beamed with fas-  
cination. . .

Flew then, the dreadful Tale abroad ?  
Of One, invited to be coaxed and kissed,  
A genteel drawing-room elocutionist,  
Proving a demon, and an antichrist,  
And a whole Convent fiercely clapper-clawed ?  
Evil Report, that runs so fast,  
Already, I am sore afraid,  
Will o'er his fame a blight have cast ;  
Something *must* have been lightly said.  
But for mishaps who make amends,  
Who hide our faults, like earliest friends ?

Then, Muse ! take, with thy best endeavours,  
Our Hero back from Nantes to Nevers.—

\* \* \* \* \*

Alas ! to Nevers he no sooner came,  
O sin, O sorrow, and O shame !  
Than, in his ancient Home, the rattling roaring Blade,  
With many a bounce, and fling, and escapade,  
Commences such a serenade !

That ———

But we must not act a scene,  
So lately acted, o'er again.  
Straight the Criminal was chained,  
And before the Bench arraigned :  
A Bench ! that—but I must not stay  
Its individuals to portray.

Some said, transgressions of such weight  
Death alone could expiate.

Some, with more charitable aim,  
Back to the Indies, whence he came,  
Would have shipped off the Infidel,  
With native heathen tribes to dwell.

His punishment was fixt at last :  
VERT-VERT for certain months must fast ;

Upon the grounds that prison-diet,  
If not reform, would keep him quiet ;  
And that the solitary system  
Must of impertinence divest him.  
O'er him a Jailoress was set,  
For that weird-like employment fit :  
A cross-grained, withered, wrinkled, sly,  
Fourscore-year-old anatomy.  
In her formal hood and cap  
She shewed like disguised grandam-ape.  
'Twas penance to sustain her view :—  
    Lay-sister she, and Convent-drudge ;  
And nothing of the world she knew,  
    But that she owed the world a grudge.  
Banished from sight of living creature,  
Saving the sight of that grim Feature,  
The Convict's life was all privation,  
And miserable expiation.  
Yet, pitying his forlorn condition,  
In spite of every prohibition,  
Though for their pains no happier he  
Without the bon-bon Liberty,  
Some younger Nuns, resolved to risk it,  
Contrived to send him plums and biscuit.

For, with kind heart and tender hand,  
Woman in doing good is blest:  
Besides, a spice of contraband  
Of doing good improves the zest.

Seclusion, regimen, and shame,  
The fiercest dispositions tame.  
VERT-VERT, with these reflection's aids,  
Forgot his slang, and gasconnades.  
To expression fair and ripe  
He schooled afresh his conversation ;  
And pitched the tenor of his pipe  
To monastic intonation.  
He is aweary of his errors :  
Justice ! lay aside thy terrors ;  
Be assured of his repentance ;  
Pardon him ; cut short his sentence,  
In perfect reconciliation.  
Joy, joy ! the period is forestalled ;  
And VERT-VERT—whitewashed—is recalled !

That Day of plenary indulgence  
Rose with proportionate fulgence ;  
No cloud upon the welkin lowered

With shadow of event untoward ;  
And not a Nun inclined to spoil it  
By any negligence of toilet.  
That Day the cook divinely catered :—  
Swept was the garden, mown, and watered :—  
That Day the moments flew like Loves :  
    Bouquets disposed in rare devices  
Lent their hues to the alcoves :—  
    After dinner, fruit, and ices,  
Coffee, cream, liqueurs, and gateaux :—  
    Nay I was told of a guitar  
Discoursing music secular :—  
    All within the Convent's border  
Smiled, in amiable disorder ;  
Like a picture—one of Watteau's !  
And he, the Hero of the day,  
VERT-VERT, never looked so gay ;  
Never had so much to say,  
Without unprofitable chatter ;  
See him ! hear him ! manner, matter,  
Quite becoming an Abbé :  
Quite as willing, quite as able  
Too, he proves himself at table.  
But—O bounteous indiscretion !  
    Superlative improvidence !

From the drear cells of abstinence,  
To the soft palace of repletion,  
    Too, too suddenly he passed.

VERT-VERT ! could fresh confectionary  
So fire thine appetite unwary ?

    That fatal cheesecake ! 'twas thy last !  
Fell surfeit, with consuming power,  
Struck at thee, in a luckless hour.  
The Leech was called, to keep in life  
With vomit and with laxative :  
The Sisters summon aid on aid :—

In vain ! changed be the rose for cypress' shade :  
The charming VERT-VERT low in death is laid !  
Venus herself came down to close his eyes,  
And lead his spirit to the Paradise  
Prepared for pious Birds, that Ovid sung :  
The Convent's great saloon with black was hung :  
Weeks—months—elapsed, before the Sisters' grief  
In tambour-stitch and broidery, found relief ;  
Working his Portrait, and beneath, his Name,  
With crystal beads, like tear-drops, round the frame,  
Graced with the legend of his dying words,  
In lasting memory of that best of Birds.  
Nor wanted Artemisia there, to put  
His Mausoleum at a myrtle's foot.

A polished Urn of porphyry marks the place :  
 A Tablet, grav'n with Verse, the Urn doth grace,  
 With flowers in sculptured festoons wreathed about :  
 None with unbroken voice can read the Verses out.

*Ye Novices, who hither come to prate,  
 As soon as your Superior's back is turned,*

*In this dark yew-tree shade one moment wait ;  
 Listen to one that mourns—that long has  
 mourned.*

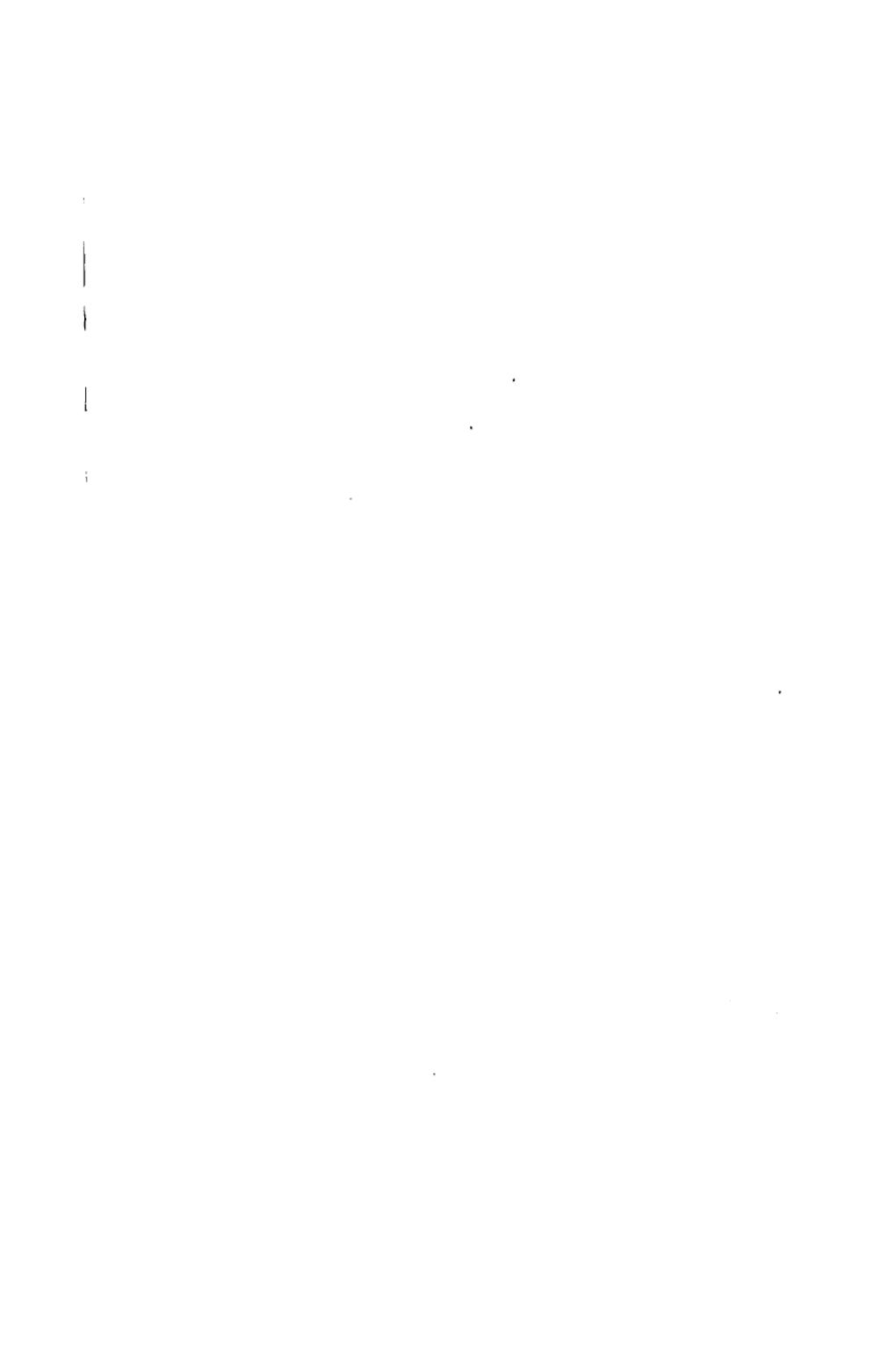
*Is listening painful, for a space so brief ?  
 Prate on then—but in tones of sympathy :  
 Three words of mine will tell you all my grief—  
 Here lies VERT-VERT, here all hearts with  
 him lie !*

To conclude my conclusion, and its glosses—  
 'Tis very certain, by Metempsychosis,  
 Untomb'd, our VERT-VERT's ghost the earth is  
 walking :  
 For I believe, when learned Doctors say,  
 From Nun to Nun the immortal Popinjay  
 Migrates, the spirit and the soul of talking.



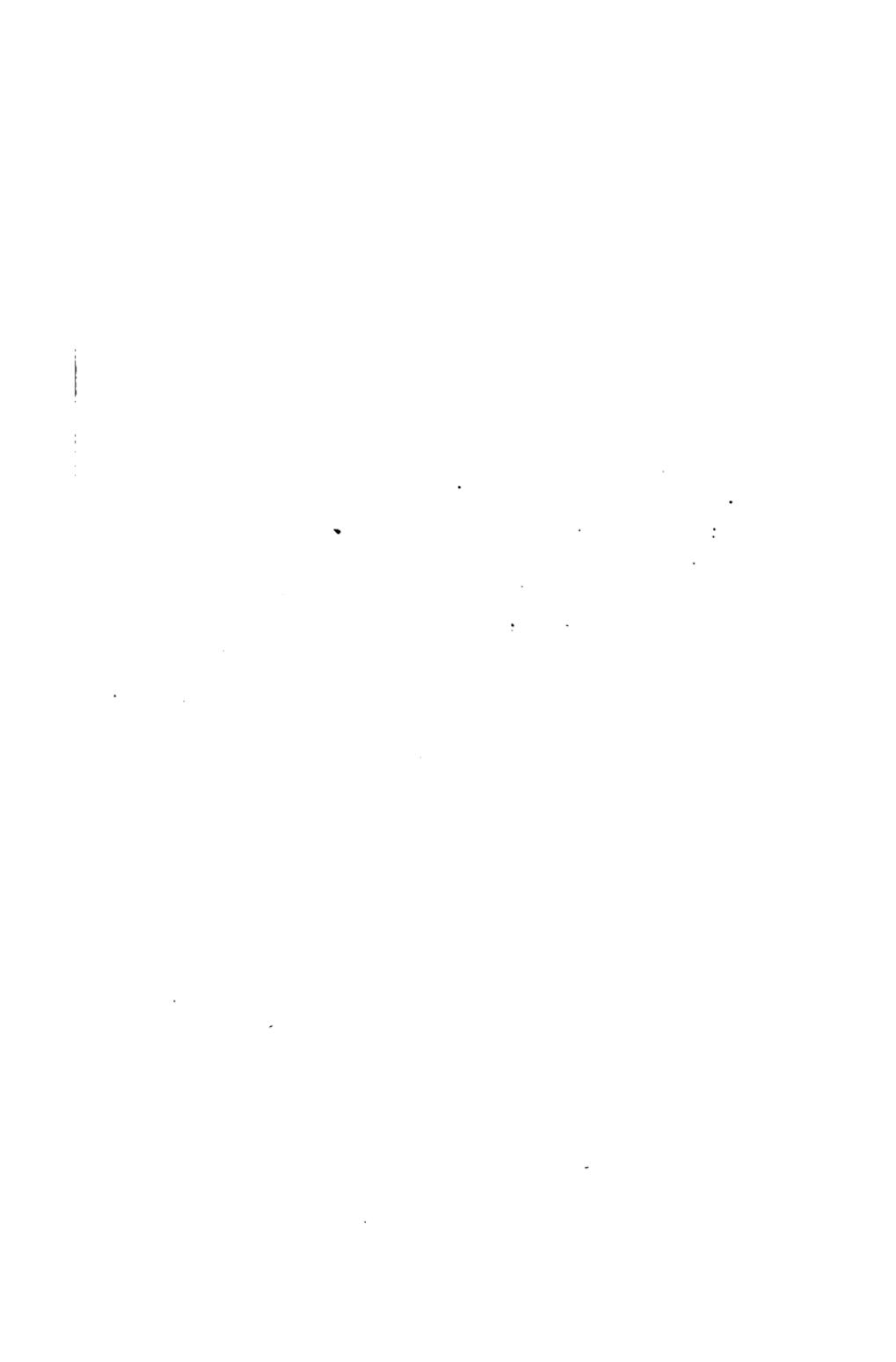
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